1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Fig. 1. Vedda settlement at Unuwatura Bubula

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Fig. 2. Village Veddas of Dambani

[Facing p. 48]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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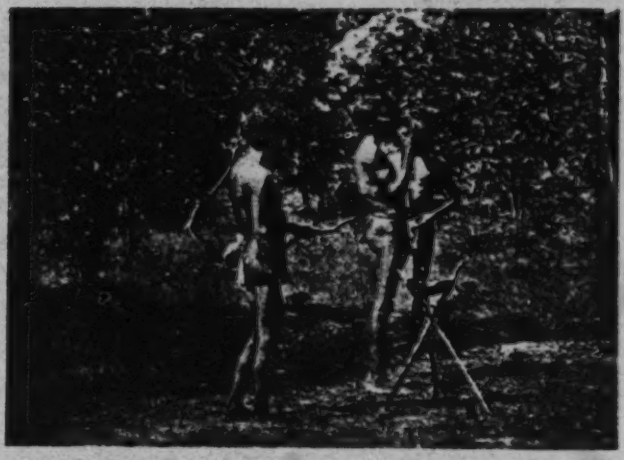

Fig. 1. Kirikoraha ceremony, censing the *asude* and coconut (Henebedda)

Fig. 2. Kirikoraha ceremony, the shaman dances with the *asude* and coconut (Henebedda)

[facing p. 220]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Fig. 1. Kirikoraha ceremony, the *bulatyaAana* (Unnwatura Bubula)

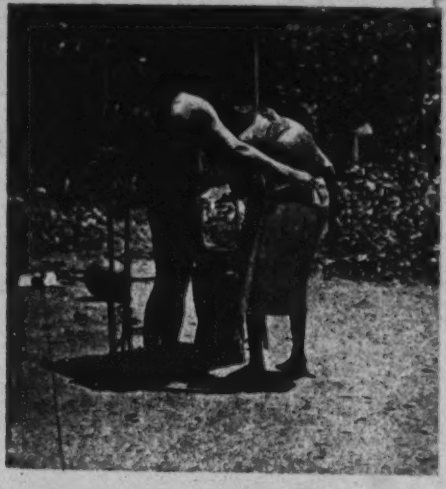

Fig. 2. Kirikoraha ceremony, the shaman before the *bulatyahana* (Unnwatura Bubula)

[facing p. 238]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Fig. 1. Bambura Yaka ceremony, preparing the *tadiya* (Sitala Wanniya)*

[417]

Fig. 2. The Bambura Yaka ceremony begins by Handuna singing an invocation (Sitala Wanniya)*

[facing p. 242]

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Fig. 1. Bambura Yaka ceremony, the boar wounds the hunter (Sitala Wanniya)*

[417]

Fig. 2. Bambura Yaka ceremony, the boar is at length killed (Sitala Wanniya)*

[facing p. 242 b]

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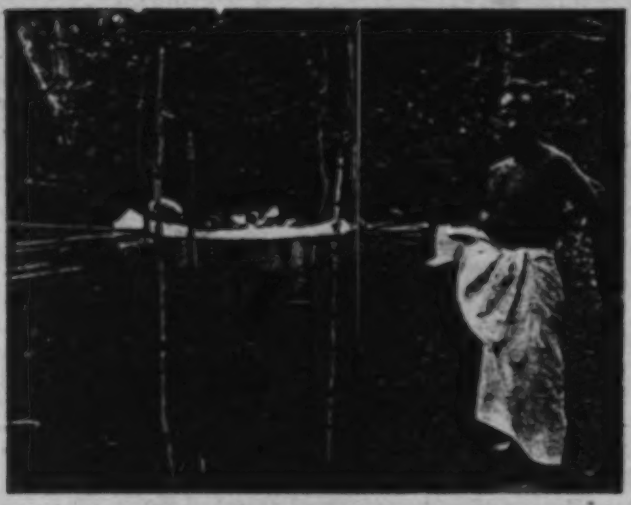

Fig. 1. Bambura Yaka ceremony, offerings and properties prepared for the ceremony by Wannaku of Uniche (Maha Oya)

Fig. 2. Bambura Yaka ceremony, Wannaku kills the boar (Maha Oya)*

[facing p. 246]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann- E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Fig. 1. Alutyakagama ceremony, the shaman about to spin the pot of food (Unuwatura Bubula)

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Fig. 2. Ruwala ceremony, the *ruwala* prepared by Wannaku of Uniche (Maha Oya)

[facing p. 262]

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-8 (1907-1908) 1911
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Invocations to Bambura Yaka.

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The invocations to Bambura Yaka are the most puzzling of all those we collected. None of our informants understood them and the translations given were fragmentary, or else we were told that although the words of the sentences could be translated so as to make some sort of sense, the significance of the invocation was unknown, or if appreciated did not necessarily agree with the meaning of the literal translation. Further, although it is certain that Bambura Yaka especially gives success in searching for yams and hunting pig, Mr Parker's translations make it quite certain that these invocations really apply to honey collecting. The reference to the "golden creeper," i.e. the ladder made of jungle creepers and used in taking honey, lowered across the face of the Inginiya rock makes this certain. Nevertheless both at Sitala Wanniya and Uniche, invocations with these expressions in them were recited as invocations to Bambura Yaka to send pig, and none of our informants regarded Bambura Yaka as having anything to do with honey. It may be suggested tentatively that the resemblance in sound of Bambura the home of the *yaka* and *bambara*, the word for the rock bee, may have brought about this confusion.

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Sitala Wanniya.

XXVII. *Mē magē Bamburayi, Bamburayi. Magē Bamburō hat paḍiṭ nāḍew nāḍew gala gala suniyaniyō.*

Mē mas muratala gōḍu maḷāsē maḍuhat hāpu hatala sindu deṇḍē hapa no kiyaṇḍē. Mē kuḍā Inginiyā gulaṭa hāpu ray wasla gulat gala gala mē wara waṭī goḷā.

This is my Bamburā, Bamburā. While my Bamburā is eating rice make a sound, make a sound, "gala, gala"—save, save (him)—by magic.

At this very instant destroying the mounds (on the face of the rock) be pleased to give to the mouth that has eaten honey (the power to sing) songs (correctly and) not to speak nonsense. Save, save (both) the golden creeper that has been lowered down this little Ingiriya rock and the rock, (or otherwise) this time the rock will fall.

"Bamburō (pl.) and Bamburani are honorific forms of Bamburā. Compare *Maharajeni*, used in addressing a king.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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from trees. Besides the *bambara* other species including the small stingless bee supply a considerable quantity. The first two months of our sojourn in the Vedda country (January and February) was at a time when honey was particularly scarce, and even at the end of March and in April it was not abundant, yet such was the courtesy of the Veddas that each community managed to make us a small present of honey, though this often entailed a long search and the combs were frequently full of grubs. In two communities only, which were better off than the others, namely Danigala and Kulukalaeba, were we given large pots of strained honey, the remains of the previous year's store.

The manner in which *bambara* colonies are regarded as property has been discussed in Chapter v. Writing in 1886 Nevill says, "Honey forms a great part of their diet. It is eaten fresh in large quantities, wax and all; combs with young bees in them being considered especially wholesome. It was also the practice formerly to store strips of dried meat in honey, filling in a cavity of some tree with it, the cavity being first lined with clay. At present they barter away their surplus meat and honey, during the hunting season, and keep no store for the rainy season. This often brings privation and is one cause of the rapid decrease in their numbers.

"They tell me their health is never so good as when their food largely consists of yams and honey.

"To procure honey they rapidly cut open hollow trees, even of the hardest wood; and to take the hives of the large black bambara bee, they make long ladders of cane, called 'rang kendiya,' by which they descend precipices, and cut off the combs adhering to their sides.

"They do this at night, generally, as the bees are not so savage then; and smoke them with a sort of resin. The hives are often cut off with a sort of wooden sword, made for the occasion. These frail ladders swing fearfully, and the task is so dangerous, only the boldest and most athletic attempt it. While engaged on the task they sing lustily, songs specially made, which appease the spirit of the rock, and prevent him from dashing the hunter off the ladder. They also go about

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

of the huts in the Morane chena settlement at Henebedda. It was shown us with pride by Handuna who said he was keeping it for his twelve year old son. He told us that in the old days the hollow branches, the homes of colonies of these bees, were frequently kept in the rock-shelters.

The ladder with the help of which *bambara* honey is collected consists of a greatly elongated loop of cane, apparently derived from a species of *Calamus*, across which rungs of creeper are stretched. In Plate LV (p. 290) there can be seen the bottom of the ladder some fifty feet long, used for training the young, hung from the top of the cliff across the face of the rock mass at Sitala Wanniya. In spite of the fact that honey is usually gathered at night the Veddas do not travel or hunt at night and know only two stars by name. One of these is a star or more probably a planet which often appears close to the moon and is called *pantaru* which, we were told, is the name by which the Sinhalese know it. The other named star appears soon after sunset, always in the same place and before the other stars, and is almost certainly Venus; this is called *irabada tarua*, i.e. "side of sun star." Although the Veddas hunt in the dusk of the dawn the idea that anyone would roam about at night seemed absolutely ludicrous to them (Sitala Wanniya), they roared with laughter at it, "why should one go into the jungle? it would be too dark to see to shoot, besides bears are about, absurd idea," they laughed again, in fact it was quite ten minutes before Kaira had forgotten the joke.

MASTICATORIES.

All Veddas chew eagerly, but as they can rarely obtain a supply of areca nuts they commonly use instead of these the bark of the *demata* tree (*Gmelina asiatica*) and the *dawata* tree (*Carallia integerrima*). Concerning the other plants that they use as masticatories Nevill says, "They occasionally chew the leaves of several aromatic herbs, particularly *Anisochilus suffruticosus*, a sort of sage that grows on rocks. The areca does not grow wild in the Eastern Province, but Veddas are very fond of the seeds of the lakada bush, *Gardenia carinata*, a

Plate XIX

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Fig. 1. Settlement of Coast Veddas

[417]

Fig. 2. Settlement of Coast Veddas

[facing p. 332b]

5. NESTS AND HIVES

This is the time to climb the steep;
Up through the shadowy woods to grope,
Over the stones where the lichens creep,
On to the crag that crowns the slope;
To the wild bees stronghold hushed in sleep.

J. STILL

NESTS

136 222 In dark fearsome caverns, and down the sides of dizzy ravines, the little edible-nest swiftlet builds its dainty nest fashioned of hardened saliva and moss. Those who think they know better will tell you that the all but invisible specks, sometimes seen high away in the empyrean at dusk, are flights of these birds on their way to the sea to gather salt foam with which to build.

222 [439] One of the favourite pursuits of the Veddas is the collecting of these nests for barter. They call the birds *kudukarayas* (nest-makers) and their nesting caves *kudu galges*. These caves are often deep gloomy recesses only entered with lighted candles (made by squeezing a column of bees-[373] wax round a central wick of cloth or bark) to scare away the scores of poisonous snakes (*karawalas* and *mapilas*) that gather there to eat the eggs and young. Sometimes the nests stud the steep sides of narrow [417] gorges, and are then taken by the aid of cane ladders let down from above.

The nesting-places are a secret the Veddas guard closely. When they took me on one of their expeditions it was on the condition that no bearers came. A hard climb brought us to near the summit of the tree-covered mountain side. "*Cho-ho-ho*," shouted the Veddas as a warning to possible bears. The approach to the cave was over-run with *aralu-wel* (used for bows) and *niyande* (of which waist strings are made). The cave itself, surmounted by an enormous rock the fall of which seemed imminent, was dark and stifling; and it was quite a time before one could discern the cup-shaped nests that clung in clusters to the vaulted roof. A Vedda handed me a parent bird he had trapped, a tiny-beaked, brownish thing, with sweeping wings, black feet and unswallow-like tail. It was quite a time too before one realised that there was a commotion in the air, and that little wraith-like forms were flitting in and out in sore distress "Swish, swish; wing, wing; twit, twit; kisiri, bisiri; takara, takara; kata, kata, kata," as from fairy castanets, came the barely audible sounds. Outside, these were louder, "Chara-chiris, chara-chiris; che-week, che-week, che-week," they twittered in futile resentment. But to these sounds the ruthless despoilers were deaf, as, mounted on heaps of stones, they scraped away with knife or arecanut cutter the trim nests from their tenacious attachments, leaving only those with [252] eggs behind, lest the colony be killed outright. On a boulder near by was a fire-place where the young had been roasted, as Kauwa of Divulana had described.

8: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

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"Over the edge." (Page 89)

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Honey-gatherer, girt with torches and stake, ready to descend. (Page 89)

[Facing p. 87]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1930) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

HIVES

There are five varieties of honey bee in Ceylon:—The large *bambara* (*Apis dorsata*) that builds huge combs of very pure wax on bare hill sides and the large branches of lofty trees; the *mee massa* (*Apis indica*) sweetest honey bee of all, whose combs are to be found in hollow trees, rock-clefts and within ant-hills; the *dandual massa* (*Apis florea*), the smallest honey-bee in the world, that hives on rocks and boughs; the *kanawa massa* (Rosin or Dammar bee) a docile, stingless, friendly little creature whose long black combs within tree crevices yield a delicious, if heady, honey; the *kotha massa*, an even smaller species, whose puny comb is hardly worth the taking. 222 136

Kanawa and *kotha* combs are available all the year round; they are the *pathinchiharayas* or stayers. If the Vedda is hungry it is for one of these he goes at a pinch. The *bambara* and *mee massa*, the most abundant honey makers, are seasonal in their habits; and June and July are the great honey months; the fruit season synchronising with this, marks these months as the festive time of the jungle; then the Veddas leave their homes for caves and stream beds, take their fill, and have a surplus for barter. 222 [439]

On the flavours of honey the Veddas are connoisseurs. They can tell by tasting a comb the flower or medley of flowers that contributed to its making. That honey is relished most which prevails when the *mora*, *vera* and *galseembela* are in bloom. [151 262]

Honey gathering is the master art of the Vedda. Supreme as he is in other jungle crafts, he is supremest in this. As he travels through the forest he is alive to the faintest hum, and no hive, however concealed, escapes him. His adroitness in tracking a bee to its lair is well described in a delightfully euphonious song they have (beginning, *Thomba, thomba Gomba me-na-na*), that tells of a Vedda Thutha who goes on the honey quest with his brothers Gomba and Naga. Thutha leads in the trail of a particular bee; and as he goes he sings to his brothers, indicating various trees in which bees are busy; but not decoyed by these, and with his eye steadily on the bee he first sighted, he follows it, till eventually it guides him to its hive within the skull of an elephant—*kolanathe gatche* (tree without leaves) as he quaintly describes. [533]

The taking of any hive, other than that of the rock *bambara*, is a very simple thing for the Vedda. All he does is to climb the tree, steady himself at the hole containing the comb, and blow into it to drive the bees away. Then with his axe he enlarges the opening sufficiently to enable him to introduce a hand and secure the cache, stopping every now and then to blow inside or to slap an offending bee. He eats the comb at his perch, grubs and all, throwing down fragments to those below.

The *bambara* comb is quite a different proposition. These great bees build high on the precipitous sides of rocks; their security lying not in their seclusion but in their inaccessibility. These hives are the prize of the bold and skilful only. A dangling cane at Westminster Abbey gave us some idea of the daring of the enterprise. To reach the combs ladders of vines are lowered from the summit of the rock; and down these the collector descends; as this does not bring him within arm's length of the hives, he has usually to rely on the use of a long stake. Sometimes [417 481]

8; Spinal D-8 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

222 the hives are beyond the reach even of this: and then, though the honey itself may not be secured, the wax may, by being dislodged with long bamboos and collected at the foot of the hill; *ili bambara* (wax hives) such combs are called. There are others, so safe under prominent brows, that they are absolutely untakeable; *yakkini baliya* (she-demon's portion) is the name of them.

417 When the rock is not too high, the ladder is made long enough to reach the ground, where it can be held slantwise close up against the face of the rock, bringing the gatherer within easier access of the hive. But where the hill is too lofty for this, as usually happens, the ladder hangs free, and the gatherer may even have to swing to and fro to enable him to get at the combs. Nor is this all; the *bambaras*, several of which may kill a man, have to be reckoned with; they can only be dispersed by heavy smoking; and, what is worse, when several hives are clustered together in a colony, the work has to be done on a pitch dark night.

Imagine then the picture of the man smothered in smoke, assailed by angry bees, swinging in the darkness two hundred feet or more above the stony earth, with neck and knee hitched to the ladder so as to leave the arms free to manipulate torch and prong. Is it a wonder that every Vedda is not a *kapumbaraya* or cutter, but only the boldest of them; and that he, when he descends to his work, does so without thought in his heart of life or father or mother?*

222 417 234 We will now describe the scene as it actually takes place:—On Panihela were five large combs the Veddas meant to have one night. That morning they assembled on the rock. Their first business was to collect the canes and vines that go to the making of the ladder (*yathala*). Two canes, some twenty or thirty feet long and about an inch in diameter, were cut, dragged to the top of the hill, and lined out. Knotting the end of one to a tree they split it in half. One man, standing at the end, held these apart; while two others stood in between, constructing strong rungs at intervals of two feet with *kiriwel* creepers, which they first looped round the two halves of the cane and then bound together with a running twist. A ladder of any length may thus be constructed; for, should a single cane not be long enough, its ends are looped and interlocked with similar loops in another length of split cane. The ladder is finished off by overlapping and binding together the free ends in the form of an U. This is the type of ladder employed in the perilous descents; where the drop is easier they do not go to all this trouble, but merely split the end of the cane for a yard or so and tie a stick across; standing on this the man is lowered.

372 222 The ladder having been completed, the *hullas* or torches and the *matha* or forked stake are yet to make. The torches, four of which are required, are designed to give a maximum of smoke, and are therefore constructed by enclosing dry *mana* grass, leaves and bark within a sheath of green leafy twigs. The *matha* or *masleya* is a stake six feet long, made of the light *velang* or *walumala*; it is pointed at one end and forked at the other by being split cross-wise into four pointed prongs which are kept apart by two pieces of stick wedged in cross-wise and tied. Both *matha* and *hulas* have long loose loops attached to them by which they are slung to the arms when not in use.

* "*Pana epa kiyath wala bahinay; amma thatha epa kiyala.*"